

## Supporting Excellent Educators

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has created an integrated system for ongoing educator improvement providing support and development for beginning educators, evaluation and continuous growth for the advancement of educators, and opportunities to extend excellent professional practice into leadership.

The key to building capacity for the best education for all Montana students is healthy collaboration and coordination of programs among the OPI and partner organizations and associations. Improving effective instructional practice ensures learning, well-being, and success for all students, including low-income and minority learners.

The Montana state plan to support excellent educators includes:

- Educator development, retention, and advancement
- Support educator quality and effectiveness
- Enhance educators' skills to address specific learning needs
- Expand partnerships to ensure all students have equitable access to effective educators.

### Montana's Teacher Licensure System

The Montana educator licensure system as defined in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) establishes the authority of the superintendent of public instruction to issue educator licenses and the board of public education to adopt procedures for the accreditation review of educator preparation programs. Professional development is defined in ARM 10.55.714 and licensure renewal requirements are outlined in ARM 10.57.215. The 60 renewal units must be a planned and structured experience, of benefit to the licensee's professional development and must be high quality, focused, job-embedded, and sustained.

Montana educator licensure system consists of three core elements:

- Educator licensure  
<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=10%2E57>
- Standards-based preparation programs  
<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=10%2E58>
- Professional growth and improvement  
<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=10%2E55%2E714>

Educator Licensure:

20-4-101, MCA. System and definitions of teacher and specialist certification student teacher exception.

(1) In order to establish a uniform system of quality education and to ensure the maintenance of professional standards, a system of teacher and specialist certification must be established and maintained under the provisions of this title and a person may not be permitted to teach in the public schools of the state until the person has obtained a teacher or specialist certificate or the district has obtained an emergency authorization of employment from the state.

20-4-106, MCA. Classifications of teacher and specialist certificates. (1) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall issue teacher certificates and the board of public education shall adopt teacher certification policies on the basis of the following classifications of teacher certificates:

ARM 10.57.102(6) "Certification" means licensure of an educator/specialist, as issued by the state of Montana, based on completion of a teacher, administrator, or specialist program of an accredited college or university. Certification includes grade level(s), endorsement(s), and classification.

ARM 10.57.102 (8) "Endorsement" means an official indication on a license of the grade level(s), subject area(s), or specialist program area(s) as listed in Subchapter 4 for which the licensee is authorized to practice in Montana accredited schools. Grade levels are:

- (a) Age 3 - grade 3 (early childhood);
- (b) K-8 (elementary);
- (c) 4-8 (middle grades);
- (d) 5-12 (secondary, content-specific);
- (e) K-12 (as delineated in ARM [10.57.412](#)); and
- (f) P-12 (special education and school psychologist).

#### *Educator Preparation:*

#### ARM 10.58.102 PROCESS LEADING TO ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROVIDERS

- (1) The Board of Public Education shall adopt procedures for the accreditation review of educator preparation providers.
- (2) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall implement the Board of Public Education's procedures by conducting accreditation site reviews.

#### ARM 10.58.103 ACCREDITATION SITE REVIEWS

- (1) Educator preparation providers (EPPs) shall sponsor an accreditation site review every seven years or on an adjusted schedule based upon coordination with national accreditation or upon request of the EPP or the Board of Public Education.
- (2) Joint accreditation site reviews and cooperation with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) will be encouraged.
- (3) Educator preparation providers are required to engage in continuous improvement.

*Professional Development and Renewal Requirements:*

ARM 10.55.714 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(1) Professional development:

- (a) Shall be aligned with district educational goals and objectives;
- (b) focuses on teachers as central to student learning and includes all other members of the school community;
- (c) Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;
- (d) Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community;
- (e) reflects proven research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership;
- (f) Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards;
- (g) promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;
- (h) is ongoing and sustained;
- (i) Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development;
- (j) requires substantial time and other resources;
- (k) Is driven by a coherent long-term plan; and
- (l) Is evaluated on the impact of professional development on teacher effectiveness and student learning, and the results of this assessment guides subsequent professional development.

ARM 10.57.215 RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS

- (1) All Montana educator licenses may be renewed with verification of 60 renewal units earned during the five years of validity through August 31 of the year the license expires.
- (3) Renewal activities used to renew all licenses must be a planned and structured experience, of benefit to the licensee's professional development as defined in ARM [10.55.714](#), an exposure to a new idea or skill or an extension of an existing idea or skill, and in compliance with (4) Activities acceptable to renew licenses.

Partners in educator licensure include, but are not limited to:

- Montana Council of Deans of Education
- Montana Council of Deans of Arts and Sciences
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
- Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council to the Board of Public Education

- MEA-MFT
- Educational Associations—Content Discipline Associations, i.e., Mathematics, Social Studies, Arts, School Counseling, Music
- Education Associations—Principal and Other School Leader Associations, i.e., school administrators, small schools, school boards, rural schools, secondary school principals, elementary and middle school principals, Indian education
- Montana citizens

### **Ensuring Adequate Preparation of Teachers**

The Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) adopts procedures and regulations governing the accreditation of Montana's nine educator preparation providers (EPPs). The BPE establishes and oversees licensure and educator preparation requirements. The Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction is authorized to review each Montana EPP on a seven-year cycle, recommending accreditation status for each provider to the BPE. The Superintendent issues licenses to eligible candidates who are recommended for licensure by an accredited educator preparation provider.

Pursuant to Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) Title 10 Chapter 58 Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards (PEPPS), state approval and accreditation status are required for the nine Montana EPPs before they are authorized to issue recommendations for licensure to the superintendent of public instruction. The BPE establishes rules and the Superintendent of Public Instruction implements these rules to help ensure high quality educator preparation programs to serve the K-12 education system in Montana.

National accreditation for Montana EPPs is voluntary. Of Montana's nine educator preparation providers, four maintain state and national accreditation through the joint accreditation process of the Montana BPE and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The Superintendent of Public Instruction facilitates site reviews of the four joint review processes, as well as conducts site reviews of the five EPPs seeking state approval only. All nine educator preparation providers are required to align to the educator preparation standards and P-12 content standards established by the Montana BPE.

From January 2014 through November 2014, the Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction and the BPE facilitated the seven-year appraisal of ARM Title 10 Chapter 58 Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards (PEPPS). Montana stakeholders participated in the review process. The BPE approved the state superintendent's recommendation of the revisions to the rules at the November 2014 meeting. The PEPPS were effective July 1, 2015. This preschool through graduate school focus will help ensure that Montana education candidates are prepared to implement a standards-based system of continuous improvement aligned with state and national standards, Montana law and requirements, and rigorous Montana P-12 content standards. College and university faculty and administration collaborate with many state partners and are responsive to the needs of Montana P-12 educators.

Montana's accredited educator preparation providers ensure that their graduates are confident and well-equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, dispositions, and resources to be effective

classroom teachers and specialists, i.e., school library media specialists, school counselors, school psychologists, principals, and other school leaders serving all Montana students, including low-income and minority students.

The following three-fold approach ensures that the Montana P-12 education system is guaranteed effective educators from the Montana educator preparation providers. The goals are to:

- Implement evidence based, high-quality educator preparation programs based on common standards that demonstrate positive impact on P-12 student achievement. (ARM 10.58 and CAEP)
- Deliver regional high quality, job-embedded, focused and sustained professional development specifically related to the state model for the evaluation of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school leaders
- Conduct Montana-focused research studies to identify effective proven strategies to support all learners including low-income and minority learners, such as, rural education and program impact on P-12 student achievement.

The Montana OPI is actively engaged with Montana EPPs in developing, maintaining, and delivering high quality professional development to improve Montana education from early childhood (Preschool through Grade 3) through graduate education. The primary focus of this systemic effort is to deepen the partnership among Preschool to postsecondary P-20 educators to ensure that every “new” educator has access to quality and authentic curriculum, resources, mentors, and learning focused conversations. Stakeholders’ training suggestions to increase new educator effectiveness include but are not limited to:

1. Differentiation in methodology
2. Knowledge and understanding of cultural differences of students (poverty, tribal, or other minorities)
3. Knowledge and understanding of Montana standards
4. Use of technology to support personalized instruction

Partners in ensuring adequate preparation of teachers include, but are not limited to:

- Montana EPPs
- Schools and school districts
- Regional educational support organizations
- Montana’s community colleges, tribal colleges, public and private colleges, and universities
- Statewide education organizations and agencies
- National education organizations, agencies and other entities

Montana’s system for professional growth:

The OPI has an integrated system for ongoing educator improvement designed to provide support and growth for beginning educators, continuing methods for evaluation and improvement of teaching and leading, and opportunities to extend excellent professional practice through leadership.

Montana's professional growth system uses multiple components to support a broad spectrum of educator needs, including:

- A state model for educator evaluation and professional growth, based on an improvement framework using a recurring process of goal-setting, observation, reflection, and selected improvement within formative and summative learning cycles
- Mentoring and induction programs for teachers and educational leaders dedicated to accelerating new teacher development to increase student achievement
- High quality, accessible professional learning opportunities for all levels of teachers and school leaders that is focused, job-embedded, and sustainable

Future goals include:

- Strengthening and supporting educator skills to implement the model system for educator evaluation and professional growth through partnerships with schools and regional service organizations,
- Supporting and guiding new teachers and school leaders using focused strategies with demonstrated success in advancing skills and practice, and
- Developing, presenting and supporting quality professional development in a range of delivery modes to meet educators' needs including, but not limited to,
  - Distance learning
  - Face-to-face
  - Blended
  - Professional learning communities

Partners in the Montana system for professional growth include, but not limited to:

- Individual schools
- Larger school districts
- Regional educational support organizations
- Montana EPPs
- Montana's community colleges, tribal colleges, public and private colleges, and universities
- Statewide education organizations and agencies
- National education organizations, and other agencies and entities

### **Increasing Student Achievement with Rigorous State Standards**

Improving educators' competence in instructional leadership and teaching Montana's rigorous, college- and career-ready content standards is the foundation for increasing student achievement in the state of Montana.

Montana provides a broad range of support for teachers and school leaders to use, develop, revise, and respond to state standards through:

- A regular system of standards review,
- Growing teacher leadership projects structured around standards-based teaching and assessment,
- Accessible standards-focused professional learning opportunities, and

- Alignment of Montana’s educator preparation programs with state P-12 content standards.

#### OPI Programs and Initiatives

Supporting educators to increase student achievement through rigorous state standards, the ESSA Stakeholders suggested that the OPI coordinate and collaborate across programs including, but not limited to:

- Montana-EPAS,
- Indian Education for All,
- Content Standards and Instruction,
- All Title I efforts,
- Early Learning initiatives (Preschool through Grade 3),
- Programs for English Learners,
- Special Education (IDEA), Multi-tiered Systems of Support, and the Montana Behavioral Initiative,
- Gifted and Talented Education,
- Career and Technical Education Pathways

#### Future goals include:

- Continuing to develop educator leadership, capitalizing on schools with notable leadership in using challenging standards to increase student academic achievement and
- Increasing accessible professional learning opportunities for all teachers, principals, and other school leaders especially those serving rural and high-need schools.

#### Partners in Montana’s system for professional growth leading to increased student achievement through rigorous state standards include, but are not limited to:

- Individual schools,
- Larger school districts,
- Regional educational support organizations,
- Montana EPPs
- Montana’s community colleges, tribal colleges, public and private colleges, and universities
- Statewide education organizations and agencies, and
- National education organizations, agencies, and models.

#### **Improving the Quality and Effectiveness of Educators**

Montana’s systems to improve the quality and effectiveness of educators are structured around the concept that all educators can and are responsible to continuously improve their knowledge and skills in order to better meet the needs of their students.

#### Key components of Montana’s system to improve the quality and effectiveness of its educators are:

- Ongoing partnerships with Montana’s educator preparation programs,
- A state model system of educator evaluation with structures to fundamentally change educational practice in response to student engagement in the classroom, mentoring and

induction programs to accelerate new educators' skill levels, and guidance and support to advance capable and professional school leaders,

- A system of broadly accessible (both geographically and financially) high-quality professional development,
- A network of effective educators involved in and extending knowledge through teacher leadership projects, and
- Collaboration and coordination with regional partner organizations to deliver responsive professional development that meets local needs and is high quality, focused, job-embedded, and sustained professional development.

Future goals include:

- Strengthening and supporting the implementation of the state model system for educator evaluation and ongoing professional growth through partnerships with schools, regional service organizations and statewide organizations, and
- Developing, presenting, evaluating, and supporting high quality, focused, job-embedded, sustained professional development in a range of delivery modes to meet teachers' and emerging school leaders' needs.

OPI and Partners in working to improve the quality and effectiveness of educators include, but are not limited to:

- Montana Council of Deans of Education
- School Administrators of Montana
- MEA-MFT
- Local school districts and regional educational support organizations
- Montana's Teacher Learning HUB
- Montana Library Association

**Increasing the Number of Effective Educators**

The OPI collaborates with key stakeholders to generate plans to help school districts with recruitment and retention of administration and teaching staff, teacher performance appraisals and professional growth, and other issues of improving school climate, instructional quality, and authenticity.

Key stakeholders include School Administrators of Montana (SAM), MEA-MFT, Montana Rural Education Association (MREA), Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA), Montana Small Schools Alliance (MSSA) and Montana Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs). These organizations and associations provide ongoing support, professional learning, technical resources, and access to outreach for Montana education networks.

Partner Initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- SAM—Leaders Professional Learning Program (LPLP)  
SAM offers district and school leaders across Montana innovative professional learning opportunities. A combination of the SAM Mentor Program and the SAM 21st Century Leadership Institute (21 CLI), the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program (LPLP) provides a unique opportunity for district and school leaders one-on-one coaching/mentoring and innovative,



student learning focused, blended professional learning opportunities while working with experienced, highly qualified Montana administrators

<http://www.sammt.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=1&ModuleInstanceID=297&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=612&PageID=1>

- Teacher Leadership Competencies  
National Teacher Association (MEA-MFT)—The Teacher Leadership Competencies are designed to frame a vision for transformative teacher leadership and express that vision in a set of competencies that teachers can use as a resource for identification, reflection, guidance, and inspiration. The standards address three vital pathways: association, instructional, and policy leadership. <http://www.nea.org/home/61346.htm>
- RISE4Montana  
This is joint initiative of the MEA-MFT, MREA, MTSBA, SAM, Montana Quality Education Coalition, Montana Association of School Business Officials, Montana Public Education Center, the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences, and Montana State University's Department of Education. The core purpose of Rise4Montana is to increase the number of available educators interested in working in Montana's public schools while preserving our current standards of quality.  
<https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/MTSBA/0e64d23d-d17f-46a0-8fd3-8024ab392f9e/UploadedImages/RISE%20elements/MT-PEC%20RISE4Montana.Press%20Release.5.3.2016.pdf>
- National Board Certification (NBC)  
NBC is a voluntary advanced professional certification for P-12 educators that identifies teacher expertise through a performance-based, peer-reviewed assessment.  
<http://www.nbpts.org/national-board-certification>
- Recruiting and Retaining Outstanding Teachers for Eastern Montana's Rural Communities The "Rural Practicum Experience" expands the MSU Teacher Education Program's clinical partnerships into Eastern Montana rural schools by taking cohorts of practicum students to the Bakken area to do their practicum work in those rural schools.
- Turnaround School Leaders  
The Rocky Mountain College Master of Educational Leadership Program's grant "Developing and Supporting Turnaround School Leaders" provides professional development, technology, and support to leaders in seven high-needs districts as identified by the OPI. The overarching goals of this program are to recruit, train, place, support, and retain turnaround leaders in School Improvement Grant (SIG) high-need schools in Montana. [www.rmc.edu](http://www.rmc.edu)

OPI programs and initiatives supporting the increase in the number of effective educators

- School Climate Program  
The OPI school climate program, a grant from the United States Department of Education, is designed to increase of evidence-based practices for implementing a Multi-Tiered System of

Supports (MTSS) in Montana schools. The MTSS model leads to improved school climate, actively supports teachers and school leaders, and improves academic outcomes for students. All of these factors improve recruitment and retention of qualified educators.

- Schools of Promise

The OPI's Title I, Part A, School Support System provides ongoing site-based support to help teachers and administrators in schools to improve their practices and upgrade skills to ensure student learning. The system, in partnership with the Schools of Promise Initiative, provides training for principals and other school leaders. This training assists the school leaders to become more effective instructional leaders and to better assist teaching staff to meet the challenges they face in improving instruction for high-need students.

- Teacher Learning Hub

The Montana Teacher Learning Hub is a learning network on the Moodle platform dedicated to providing free, high quality professional learning for all K-12 educators across Montana. Over the past three years, the MEA-MFT, MT Digital Academy, and OPI partnership project team has worked to develop over 160 online modules that focus on instructional strategies and student learning supports. The Hub has over 4,000 registered users. The Hub minimizes the time teachers spend away from their classrooms to attend training, as well as save school districts money by providing evidenced-based professional learning that does not require that teachers travel.

<http://learninghub.mrooms.net/>

- Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC)

HEC is a unique community of practice that has brought together general and special education faculty members from all teacher training programs in the State of Montana. The HEC has met twice a year for the past fifteen years to discuss critical issues and share ideas relating to teacher training programs in Montana. The meetings have created a strong partnership and collaboration between faculty members at the teacher training programs. The universities and colleges in Montana benefit from the information they receive from the Montana Office of Public Instruction. The HEC has connected and collaborated with two Office of Special Education Program (OESP) national centers: 1) International Resource Information System (IRIS) Center and 2) Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center.

<http://www.taese.org/cms/index.php/majorinitiatives/2014-01-14-03-54-22>

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

<https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/>

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The OPI is responsible for providing guidance and support to every LEA with the implementation of the Child Find requirements. The OPI monitors district performance and uses the data available to target the professional development and technical assistance activities funded by the IDEA. Examples of activities that improve the LEAs ability to support all students include:

- The Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) provides training and technical assistance to LEAs in implementing a system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to improve school

climate and parent and family involvement; and, to reduce disciplinary removals of students.  
<http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/MBI/SRS.html>

- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) uses five regional councils to develop ongoing professional development based on the needs of the LEAs in the region. In addition to conducting a needs survey, each region examines data regarding student performance and outcomes to more effectively target the professional development offered.  
<http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/CSPD/>
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides training and ongoing support to LEAs in developing and implementing a multi-tiered framework at the school level.  
<http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/TitlePrgms/ssos.html>
- Teacher Leadership Academies and Activities to Support All Students  
The Office of Public Instruction, Montana University System (MUS), and other statewide partners are building effective professional learning programs to support teacher leaders across the state. These leaders help guide and support local and regional teachers in developing and deepening a shared understanding of content knowledge and effective instructional strategies that engage and promote student learning and academic success.

### **Providing Low-Income and Minority Students with Effective Educators**

The OPI in collaboration and coordination with individual school districts will examine data from the state system of support and other sources to develop and provide professional development aimed at specific learning needs of students, student engagement, school climate, leadership, and other school needs required for effective schools and learning.

The OPI actively assists all school districts through access to a broad range of professional development strategies. Schools use student achievement and other data from the accountability system to identify specific improvement strategies to more effectively teach low-income and minority students.

#### Future goals include:

- Expanding the abilities and skills of educators working with low-income and minority students to their unique learning needs through high quality, focused, job-embedded, sustained professional development based on experience and research into strategies that are integrated, effective, and produce results for student learning and well-being. Strategies to expand abilities and skills of current educators include, but are not limited to:
  - Implementing a single integrated school plan beginning with needs assessment and goal setting to clearly focus on school improvement
  - Providing coaching on goal-setting and building an effective plan for professional development for schools identified for targeted and comprehensive assistance
  - Scaling up of the highest quality, targeted, job-embedded, sustained professional development resources that have proven to be effective in ensuring success for low income and minority students

- Building digital literacy, technology skills, and resources for educators in schools that serve low income and minority students
- Strengthening networks between and among OPI programs and divisions that increase both capacity and effectiveness of professional development in effective teaching of low income and minority students
- Ensuring that well-qualified, effective educators who understand and are highly capable of teaching low-income and minority students are recruited by and supported in serving schools with higher numbers of low-income and minority students. Strategies to connect effective educators with schools with high populations of low-income and minority students include, but are not limited to:
  - Growing and strengthening Montana’s preschool through graduate education (P-20) network to develop a regional system of support for high-need schools with critical teaching and school leadership shortages
  - Identifying and prioritizing best practice to recruit and retain educators to serve in high-needs schools
  - Strengthening networks between and among OPI programs and divisions that increase both capacity and effectiveness of professional development in effective teaching of low income minority students

Partners in providing low-income and minority students with effective educators include, but are not limited to:

- Cross-agency collaboration and coordination at the OPI
- School districts
- Professional Educational Associations and Organizations
- Regional educational service organizations.

### **Skills to Address Specific Learning Needs**

Montana’s many programs and initiatives provide a broad range of professional development for teachers, principals, or other school leaders that are relevant, timely, and address the learning needs of all students, including, but not limited to:

- Low-income students,
- Lowest-achieving students,
- Students whose schools and homes are rural, remote, and/or isolated,
- English learners,
- Children with disabilities,
- Children and youth in foster care,
- Migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school,
- Homeless children and youths,
- Neglected, delinquent, and at-risk children identified under Title I, Part D of the ESEA,
- Immigrant children and youth,

- Students in LEAs eligible for grants under the Rural and Low-Income School Program American Indian and Alaska Native students,
- Students with low literacy levels, and
- High ability/high potential students (gifted and talented).

The OPI works with school leaders and teachers to strengthen current systems for serving students in all identified subgroups through processes including, but not limited to:

- Identification (with multiple entry points),
- Assessment or screening ,
- Timely appropriate intervention,
- Coordinated and embedded delivery systems,
- Standards for meaningful progress,
- Continued assessment, where appropriate, and
- Requirements for program exit, where appropriate.

Future goals include:

- Implementation of one continuous improvement plan for schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support in writing their plans and feedback to ensure evidence-based interventions are implemented and monitored for effectiveness
  - Data driven analysis with report card and self-assessment
  - Data driven goals identified for ELA, math, and climate
  - Strategies for achieving goals including identifying professional development, technical assistance, stakeholder involvement, monitoring of progress, and measurable outcomes
- The OPI will use past and current work that shows strong or promising evidence for helping schools improve, such as:
  - State Improvement Grants (i.e., school board coaches)
  - Montana Striving Readers Project (i.e., implementing systems to improve literacy outcomes)
  - American Indian Achievement Task Force (i.e., 3-person OPI and district team to ensure more cohesive support of districts and less duplication of efforts, and analysis of other effective OPI supports and interventions for low performing schools)
  - English learners (i.e., face-to-face and online workshops and resources)
  - Title I, Part D 1 and 2 programs and initiatives implementing support to educators (i.e., Homeless, foster care, neglected and delinquent, at risk)
- The OPI's strategic approach to helping educators meet the needs of all student subgroups as well as serving the needs of all students requires an inclusive model
  - Create a model framework of support for each student subgroup that integrates multiple OPI programs and projects,
  - For all schools, use regional networks, distance learning systems, and blended learning to increase the reach, depth, and integration of professional development for educators serving students in all identified subgroups,

- Frame all professional development with requirements that it be high quality, focused, job-embedded, and sustained,
- Focus on support for teachers and school leaders in high-need schools, but open professional development to all educators,
- Build capacity to serve a broad range of school district needs through using a regional delivery and/or mentoring approach when appropriate.
- What Works Clearinghouse
  - Institute of Educational Science Practice Guides will be aligned with the OPI supports and interventions to better support schools and districts in understanding and implementing evidence based intervention

Partners in addressing the needs of students in identified subgroups include, but are not limited to:

- Regional educational service organizations,
- Statewide organizations advocating for students in particular subgroups,
- Montana Behavioral Initiative,
- Montana American Indian Achievement Task Force,
- Montana Department of Corrections,
- Programs that target improving achievement for students whose skills are well behind grade level expectations,
- English Learners programs,
- Title I programs,
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and
- Gifted and Talented Education programs and resources.

### **Montana's Support of a Statewide Evaluation System**

Montanans are fiercely devoted to local control of education with 410 public school districts serving 145,316 students. School district policy, procedures, and curriculum are determined by local school boards. The Montana Educator Performance Appraisal System (Montana-EPAS) is the state model for the evaluation of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school leaders. Each district may adapt, adopt, or align procedures to meet the requirements of the Board of Public Education (BPE), Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.701(4).

<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=10%2E55%2E701>

Montana-EPAS, a standards-based evaluation system, is designed to encourage professional learning through a continuum of career development. Montana-EPAS provides useable tools for school districts to implement the state model or use a common framework to align local systems of evaluation to the state standards. Improving professional practice of educators ensures student learning, well-being, and success.

State funding to support the systemic implementation of the Montana-EPAS is limited. The OPI, in collaboration with regional partners, has developed a fee-for-service model for delivering high quality Montana-EPAS professional development to school districts across the state. Regional delivery of

workshops, work sessions, and technical assistance presented by a cadre of skilled facilitators help school districts develop and implement the following:

- A process for review of current evaluation/appraisal practices
- Goal-setting
- Learning-focused professional conversations
- Observation skills
- Formative feedback
- Summative reporting

Future goals include:

Building capacity and expanding a coordinated regional network of support for Montana-EPAS, includes, but is not limited to,

- Facilitate annual workshops and calibrations for each level of the evaluation system: teachers and specialists, principals, and superintendents
- Develop and disseminate state models of induction and mentoring programs in consultation with district personnel, colleges and universities, and professional organizations
- Coordinate and collaborate across educational professional development and support service and regional delivery entities

Partners in the work of supporting a comprehensive statewide evaluation system, include, but are not limited to:

- Regional Education Service Areas
- School Administrators of Montana
- Montana's colleges and universities
- Montana Small School Alliance
- Montana School Boards Association
- MEA-MFT
- Montana Rural Education Association
- Teaching, Learning, and Leading Collaborative (LINK)
- Special Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development,
- Title I
- Indian Education for All

### **Supporting Educator Preparation Programs**

Future goals include:

- Continuing to develop and align the tenets of the Montana state model for the evaluation of teachers, principals, and superintendents into the pre-service curriculum, preparing graduates to implement a professional growth system in Montana school districts.

## Equitable Access to Effective Educators

Montana will show whether low-income and minority students enrolled in schools that receive funds under Title I, Part A are taught at disproportionate rates by out-of-field or inexperienced teachers compared to non-low-income and non-minority students enrolled in schools not receiving funds under Title I, Part A.

### Montana's definitions for the following terms

Key Terms	Definition
Ineffective teacher	Montana has not defined the term "ineffective teacher." In 2004 and 2013 to determine "quality," Montana used highly-qualified teacher (HQT) status based on NCLB's requirements of HQT.
Out-of-field teacher	Montana-licensed teachers teaching outside their endorsed subject areas.
Inexperienced teacher	Montana teachers with less than one year of teaching experience.
Low-income student	The determination of poverty is based on the percentage of students at a school who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches through the National School Lunch Program. For the purposes of this report, schools were credited with 100 percent eligibility for free lunch.
Minority student	Students were classified as minorities if they identified as anything other than "White," not Hispanic. Race/ethnicity categories are now: 1. Hispanic 2. American Indian/Alaska Native 3. Asian 4. Black/African-American 5. White 6. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 7. Multiracial/Two or More Races
Rural Locales/Rural/Remote	Montana is one of only three states characterized as High Percent of Overall Rurality and Very Isolated/Remote Rural Communities The rural/isolated nature and large geographic area of Montana are primary elements of influence on inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers in public schools.

In 2005 and 2013 Montana compared student access to highly-qualified teachers in the highest- and lowest-poverty schools, as well as the highest- and lowest-minority schools, and identified the following equity gaps.



### **Equity Gap 1: Disparity of Access to HQTs in High-Poverty Secondary Schools**

In 2005 the percentage of secondary students taught by a HQT was 2.1 percent higher in low-poverty schools compared to high-poverty schools. By 2013, that gap closed to 1.5 percent.

### **Equity Gap 2: Discrepancy of Equitable Access to HQTs between Secondary and Elementary students by High- and Low-Poverty and High- and Low-Minority Quartiles for Secondary and Elementary students**

In 2005 the percentage of elementary students in high-poverty schools taught by a HQT was 2 percentage points higher than secondary students in high-poverty schools. In 2013 the gap decreased with the elementary students in high-poverty schools taught by a HQT was 1.6 percentage points greater than the secondary students in high-poverty schools.

### **Equity Gap 3: Rural/Remote Nature of Montana Schools**

Rural schools form the overwhelming percentage of all schools. Seventy-five percent of Montana schools are classified as rural.

#### Future goals to advance the work of closing the equity gaps include:

- Guaranteeing all students greater access to effective educators in every Montana district, school, and classroom
- Increasing collaborative efforts to continue improvements in teacher preparation outreach, recruitment, retention, and online support to teachers who teach in rural, remote, and isolated regions of the state and in schools with low-income and minority students.

### **Determining Disproportionality of Students Taught in Schools**

The OPI will use 2013 and 2015 data to illustrate whether low-income and minority students enrolled in schools receiving Title I, Part A funds are taught at disproportionate rates by out-of-field or inexperienced teachers compared to non-low-income and non-minority students enrolled in schools not receiving Title I, Part A. The OPI will calculate and report student-level data on a statewide basis.

### **Public Reporting**

- Beginning spring of 2018, the OPI will publish and annually update:
  - Rates of disproportionalities calculated
  - Percentage of teachers categorized as ineffective
  - Percentage of teachers categorized as out-of-field teachers
  - Percentage of teachers categorized as inexperienced
- The rates will be reported as follows:
  - Rate at which students are taught by an out-of-field teacher
    - low-income students enrolled in schools receiving funds under Title I, Part, A
    - non-low-income students enrolled in schools not receiving funds under Title I, Part A
    - minority students enrolled in schools receiving funds under Title I, Part A
    - non-minority students in schools not receiving funds under Title I, Part A

- Rate at which students are taught by an inexperienced teacher
  - low-income students enrolled in schools receiving funds under Title I, Part, A
  - non-low-income students enrolled in schools not receiving funds under Title I, Part A
  - minority students enrolled in schools receiving funds under Title I, Part A
  - non-minority students in schools not receiving funds under Title I, Part A

## Identifying Root Causes of the Determining Factors

The OPI will use the 2015 process to identify root causes of determining factors:

1. Identifying relevant, available, and updated data
2. Analyzing data and identifying equity gaps
3. Identifying root causes
4. Aligning Strategies to root causes

In 2015 Montana focused primarily on the assignments of Highly Qualified Teachers (HQTs) teaching core academic subject classes. In addition to the HQT assignments across all quartiles, the 2015 state plan compared data of high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority schools and students. While the percentages are statistically low, the data revealed unacceptable equity gaps that affect high-poverty and high-minority schools and students.

Montana OPI examined HQT data in schools across poverty and minority quartiles, the percentage of access to HQTs of poor and minority students across all quartiles, and the Locale Codes and Locale Urban Codes of high-poverty and high-minority schools to identify possible root causes of Montana equity gaps. The OPI team targeted the following root causes that appear to be obstacles of closing the equity gaps.

- Rural/Remote/Isolated Nature of Montana

Rural schools form the overwhelming percentage of all schools. Seventy-five percent of Montana schools are classified as rural. High-poverty schools are more likely to be remote and/or rural.

The rurality and high poverty can often lead to turbulent systems where stable administration and teaching staff are difficult to attain or maintain. Such circumstances, for example, may lead to late recruitment for key positions within the district, while other more stable districts complete the hiring process earlier.

Pay, benefits, working conditions, and cultural issues contribute to the challenges of recruiting, hiring, and retaining high quality secondary school teachers. Larger districts have better compensation and benefits packages. Teachers in small rural schools often are isolated with a limited support system. Mentoring can be difficult when there are so few staff in rural schools. Often “good teachers” move on because they are experienced and qualified to teach at a larger, better paying school.

Often difficulty in locating housing and other important life considerations, e.g., access to medical care, shopping, and finding personal necessities, adds problems of hiring and retaining effective educators. The isolation is often difficult for staff that are not from these communities.

There are many stories of staff being hired, moving to the community, and then promptly leaving or lasting part of the school year before leaving.

- **Extreme Poverty/Minority Schools**

In 2005 the percentage of secondary students taught by a HQT was 2.1 percent higher in low-poverty schools compared to high-poverty schools. By 2013, that gap closed to 1.5 percent.

In 2005 the percentage of elementary students in high-poverty schools taught by a HQT was 2 percentage points higher than secondary students in high-poverty schools. In 2013 the gap decreased with the elementary students in high-poverty schools taught by a HQT was 1.6 percentage points greater than the secondary students in high-poverty schools.

High-minority schools are more prevalent in the city categories than expected. The city schools are the largest schools in the “High Minority” quartile. Also, all of the high-poverty schools in the city locale codes are high-minority schools, but there are more high-minority schools in the city locale that are not high poverty.

#### **Future Goals for Addressing Disproportionality:**

- Recruitment, Hiring, Development, and Retention of Qualified Educators

The OPI relies on the support of key stakeholders to generate plans to help school districts with recruitment and retention of administration and teaching staff, teacher performance appraisals and professional growth, and other issues of improving school climate, instructional quality, and authenticity. Key stakeholders include Montana Small Schools Association, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Association, MEA-MFT, Montana Rural Education Association, Montana Professional Education Center, and Montana Quality Education Collaborative. These organizations provide ongoing support, professional learning, technical resources, and access to outreach for Montana education networks.

- Developing and Supporting Turnaround School Leaders

The Rocky Mountain College Master of Educational Leadership Program’s Turnaround School Leaders grant provides professional development, technology, and support to leaders in seven high-needs districts as identified by the OPI. The overarching goals of the grant are to recruit, train, place, support, and retain turnaround leaders in School Improvement Grant (SIG) local education agencies in Montana.

- Regional Teacher Sharing

Sharing the services of properly licensed and endorsed teachers for schools with hard-to-fill positions in core academic subjects among districts ensure equity in teacher quality among schools. The OPI is working with the Montana Association of School Superintendents, MEA-MFT, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Association, Montana Small Schools Alliance, Montana Rural Education Association, Tribal Education Departments and Councils, Special Education Cooperatives,

and the Regional Education Service Areas to expand a regional system to equitably distribute experienced, in-field, and effective teachers.

[http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/Index.html?gpm=1\\_12#gpm1\\_11](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/Index.html?gpm=1_12#gpm1_11)

- Educator Talent Development Strategies Program  
As a strategy to develop educator talent, in March 2013, the Board of Public Education (BPE) adopted the superintendent's recommendation to expand eligibility for the student loan forgiveness program to elementary teachers in rural, high-poverty areas. Elementary school teachers in a special education cooperative or an impacted school with a total score of 15 or higher also are eligible for the loan forgiveness program. The Educator Talent Development Strategies Program offers incentives for teachers to take teaching positions in elementary, middle grade, and high schools in high-poverty areas. The program requires teachers remain in the program for four years to qualify for loan forgiveness.
- Title I School Support System  
This system provides ongoing support to help teachers and administrators in schools identified in need of comprehensive or targeted assistance to improve their practices and upgrade skills. The system, in partnership with the Schools of Promise Initiative, provides training for administrators in instructional leadership. This training assists the administrators to become more effective instructional leaders and to better assist teaching staff to meet the challenges they face in improving instruction for high-need students.  
<http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/TitlePrgms/ssos.html>
- School Climate Program  
The OPI obtained a school climate grant from the ED. The focus of this grant is to increase use of evidence-based practices for implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in Montana schools. The MTSS model leads to improved school climate, actively supported teachers, and improved academic outcomes for students. All of these factors improve recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.
- Indian Education Student Achievement  
The OPI supports educators across the state as they work in schools that serve Montana's largest subgroup, American Indians. Professional development, resources (lesson plans, curriculum guides, etc.), and technical assistance are provided at no cost to local schools or educators to assist them in this work. In addition, local school districts receive state level funding that is targeted toward closing the achievement gap.
- Montana Striving Readers Project  
This project assists high-need schools with intensive professional development for teachers. This high-quality, intensive development for teachers and administrators gives them opportunities to become some of the best prepared educators in the state with the ability to close the achievement gaps that have existed for their students in the past.

- Schools of Promise Initiative

Since 2011, the OPI has used the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) opportunity to enter into comprehensive school improvement partnerships with some of the state's lowest performing schools, known as the "Schools of Promise" initiative. These schools, identified as "persistently lowest achieving," are all located on Indian reservations and face dire circumstances related to poverty and extreme isolation. Through a unique, collaborative partnership, the OPI places three to four full-time staff members in each location that work alongside school staff to create greater system stability, stronger infrastructure, and better overall student outcomes. In particular, this work helps school leaders (boards of trustees and administrators) recruit, retain, and support strong educators who will impact the learning environment.

- Montana New Teacher Induction Project (MNTIP)

The purpose of the MNTIP is to establish a revitalized induction and mentoring network for districts to support their efforts to meet the ARM 10.55.701(5)(b) by establishing induction and mentoring programs in each school district. To this end, the OPI is partnering with The New Teacher Center (NTC) to help accelerate new teacher professional growth and impact student achievement through design and implementation of high-quality teacher induction and mentoring programs. The OPI and the NTC developed and are delivering statewide induction institutes and instructional mentoring workshops. This professional development program is designed for induction program leadership teams that are about to implement a new induction program or for teams looking to enhance current programs.

### **Foundational and Structural Support for All Schools**

- Montana Educator Performance Appraisal System (Montana-EPAS)

In September 2013, the BPE approved ARM Title 10, Chapter 55 Standards of Accreditation. Included in these rules are requirements for local districts to renew teacher and school leader evaluation systems. The revised standards are based on the foundation that high-quality, high-performing teachers and school leaders are critical to ensure student learning. An evaluation system based in professional growth for all educators will help to foster learning environments that meet the needs of all students. The OPI, in consultation with stakeholders, developed a state model for the evaluation of teachers and school leaders: the Montana Educator Performance Appraisal System (MT-EPAS). This standards-based evaluation system is designed to encourage professional learning through a continuum of career development. The MT-EPAS was launched in August 2013. Montana school districts are encouraged to adopt or adapt the state model, or to review and revise the local evaluation system to meet state standards. The OPI provides statewide and regional workshops to assist school leaders with the implementation of the revised standards.

- Montana Preschool Development

This project is jointly implemented by the Governor's Office, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS.)

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html>

- Regional Education Service Areas (RESA)  
The mission of the five RESAs is to establish a systemic approach that identifies regional needs and provides support to local school districts through communication, direct interaction, follow-up, and ongoing partnership. The RESA directors work collaboratively with the OPI to deliver state initiatives, projects, and programs to Montana teachers and administrators in the regions. The RESA directors work with the OPI in the following areas that are directly connected to closing the identified equity gaps: Montana-EPAS, New Teacher Induction Project, Gifted and Talented Education, and Indian Education grant support.
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)  
The OPI operates a CSPD throughout Montana. This system is based in five regions responsive to the professional development and technical assistance needs of schools in each region. Through this system, the OPI makes available high-quality, professional development to every teacher in the state.
- Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC)  
HEC is a unique community of practice that has brought together general and special education faculty members from all teacher training programs in the State of Montana. The HEC has met twice a year for the past fifteen years to discuss critical issues and share ideas relating to teacher training programs in Montana. The meetings have created a strong partnership and collaboration between faculty members at the teacher training programs. The universities and colleges in Montana benefit from the information they receive from the Montana Office of Public Instruction. The HEC has connected and collaborated with two Office of Special Education Program (OESP) national centers: 1) International Resource Information System (IRIS) Center and 2) Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center.  
<http://www.taese.org/cms/index.php/majorinitiatives/2014-01-14-03-54-22>  
<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>  
<https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/>